

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE UNDER 37 CFR § 1.111

Serial Number: 10/022,153

Filing Date: December 14, 2001

Title: COMPUTERIZED PATENT AND TRADEMARK FEE PAYMENT METHOD AND SYSTEM

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Dkt: 684.001 US2IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1-20 (Cancelled)

21. (New) A method comprising:

a law firm having at least one first account for paying at least some expenses incurred by the law firm;

the law firm using at least one second account to pay out-of-pocket costs incurred for one or more clients of the law firm, wherein at least some of the out-of-pocket costs are financed, and payments are specified for payment using a computer;

determining, using a computer, an associated expense for each of at least some of the financed out-of-pocket costs, wherein the associated expense is

i) based on an expense associated with the financing that is at least in part dependent on a length of time the law firm has to wait to be reimbursed for out-of-pocket costs,

ii) and determined substantially at the same time the corresponding out-of-pocket cost is specified to be paid; and

the law firm billing, using a computer, the one or more clients of the law firm for at least some of the financed out-of-pocket costs and for the associated expenses corresponding to the at least some out-of-pocket costs, wherein the billing for corresponding out-of-pocket costs and associated expenses are presented in the same invoice.

22. (New) A method according to claim 21 further wherein the first account is a checking account.

23. (New) A method according to claim 21 further wherein the second account is a checking account.

24. (New) A method according to claim 21 further wherein the second account is maintained specifically to pay out-of-pocket costs for clients of the law firm.

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25. (New) A method according to claim 21 further comprising:
the law firm using the first account to pay selected out-of-pocket costs incurred for the one or more clients of the law firm; and
the law firm using the at least one second account to pay selected other out-of-pocket costs incurred for clients of the law firm.
26. (New) A method according to claim 21 further wherein the financing is provided by a party independent of the law firm.
27. (New) A method according to claim 21 further wherein specifying the out-of-pocket cost to be paid comprises entering a check request for the cost.
28. (New) A method according to claim 21 further wherein specifying payment of the out-of-pocket cost comprises requesting that the out-of-pocket cost be paid at a future time.
29. (New) A method according to claim 21 further wherein the substantially at the same time comprises substantially the same day as arranging to pay the out-of-pocket cost.
30. (New) A method according to claim 21 further wherein the substantially at the same time comprises substantially the same month the out-of-pocket cost was arranged to be paid in.
31. (New) A method according to claim 21 further comprising determining for a first one of the law firm clients a first duration of time associated with financing an out-of-pocket cost for the first one of the clients and determining for a second one of the law firm clients a second duration of time associated with financing an out-of-pocket cost for the second one of the law firm clients, wherein the first duration of time is different than the second duration of time,

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wherein at least some of the associated expenses are determined based in part on the duration of time determined for the respective first and second ones of the law firm clients.

32. (New) A method according to claim 21 further comprising associating a first one of the law firm clients with a first fee schedule used to determine an associated expense to the first one of the clients and a second one of the law firm clients with a second fee schedule used to determine an associated expense to the second one of the law firm clients, wherein the first fee schedule is different than the second fee schedule; and wherein each associated expense is based in part on the cost of financing the out-of-pocket costs; and wherein the associated expenses are automatically determined based on the fee schedules associated with each respective first and second ones of the law firm clients.

33. (New) A method according to claim 21 further wherein the associated expense comprises a finance charge incurred by the law firm in relation to a particular respective out-of-pocket cost, wherein the finance charge is based substantially on a cost of financing a loan to cover payment of the out-of-pocket cost; wherein the associated expense is based on an assumption of how long the law firm client will take to reimburse the law firm for the out-of-pocket cost; and

further wherein the actual associated expense assessed the particular client is based on when the particular client reimburses the law firm for the out-of-pocket cost, wherein the particular client reimburses the law firm at a time earlier than that assumed to determine the associated expense.

34. (New) A method according to claim 21 further comprising:

a independent service provider providing services to the law firm in relation to associated expenses assessed for each of a plurality of the out-of-pocket costs incurred by the law firm for the one or more clients of the law firm.

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35. (New) A method according to claim 21 further comprising the law firm incurring an obligation to pay an associated expense in relation to each respective out-of-pocket cost.
36. (New) A method according to claim 21 further comprising receiving in a law firm accounting system data indicative of a plurality of the out-of-pocket costs for the one or more clients of the law firm and storing an associated expense in relation to at least some of each respective out-of-pocket cost wherein the associated expense.
37. (New) A system comprising:
- at least one first account for paying at least some expenses incurred by a law firm;
 - at least one second account;
 - at least one payment software module operable on a computer to generate payments drawn from the at least one second account and wherein the payments are for out-of-pocket costs incurred for one or more clients of the law firm;
 - a source of funding used to pay at least some of the out-of-pocket costs;
 - an expense determining software module operable on a computer to determine an associated expense for each of at least some of the out-of-pocket costs paid using the source of funding, wherein the associated expense is determined based on one or more parameters that at least in part are related to a length of time the law firm has to wait to be reimbursed for out-of-pocket costs, and further wherein the expense is determined substantially at the same time the corresponding out-of-pocket cost is specified to be paid; and
 - at least one billing software module operable on a computer to generate invoices to bill the one or more clients for at least some of the out-of-pocket costs paid using the source of funding and for the associated expenses corresponding to the at least some out-of-pocket costs, wherein the billing for corresponding out-of-pocket costs and associated expenses are presented in the same invoice.
38. (New) A system according to claim 37 further wherein the first account is a checking account.

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39. (New) A system according to claim 37 further wherein the second account is a checking account.

40. (New) A system according to claim 37 further wherein the second account is maintained specifically to pay out-of-pocket costs for clients of the law firm.

41. (New) A system according to claim 37 further wherein the payment software module is adapted to permit a user to selectively pay only some of the out-of-pocket costs incurred for the one or more clients of the law firm.

42. (New) A system according to claim 37 further including an account financing software module operable on a computer to determine an amount of money required to transfer to the second account to fund the cost of out-of-pocket costs paid from the second account.

43. (New) A system according to claim 37 further wherein the billing software module is adapted to invoice the one or more clients the associated expenses in relation to each respective out-of-pocket cost so that the out-of-pocket cost and the associated expense are on the same invoice for a particular law firm matter.

44. (New) A system according to claim 43 further wherein specifying payment of the out-of-pocket cost comprises requesting that the out-of-pocket cost be paid at a future time.

45. (New) A system according to claim 43 further wherein the substantially at the same time comprises substantially the same day as arranging to pay the out-of-pocket cost.

46. (New) A system according to claim 43 further wherein the substantially at the same time comprises substantially the same month the out-of-pocket cost was arranged to be paid in.

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47. (New) A system according to claim 37 further wherein the associated expense determining software module is further operable on a computer to associate a first one of the law firm clients with a first fee schedule used to determine an associated expense to the first one of the law firm clients and a second one of the law firm clients with a second fee schedule used to determine an associated expense to the second one of the law firm clients, wherein the first fee schedule is different than the second fee schedule and further wherein the associated expense determining software module is adapted to automatically determine associated expenses for the respective first one and second one of the law firm clients based on the fee schedules associated with each respective first and second ones of the law firm clients.

48. (New) A system according to claim 37 further including an accounting software module adapted to record an associated expense anticipated to be incurred by a law firm in relation to a particular respective out-of-pocket cost incurred for a particular client; and further wherein the accounting software module is further adapted to record an actual finance charge that is based on when the particular client reimburses the law firm for the out-of-pocket cost.

49. (New) A system according to claim 37 further comprising:

a service provider software module operable on a computer to record an associated expense billed to the law firm in relation to the out-of-pocket costs incurred by the law firm for the one or more clients of the law firm.

50. (New) A system according to claim 37 further comprising a law firm accounting software module operable on a computer and adapted to record an obligation of the law firm to pay an associated expense in relation to each respective out-of-pocket cost.

51. (New) A system according to claim 37 further comprising a law firm accounting software module operable on a computer and adapted to receive data indicative of a plurality of

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the out-of-pocket costs for the one or more clients of the law firm and record an associated expense in relation to at least some of each respective out-of-pocket cost.